

had only the privates covered. The stage fell and many were hurt, which was held to show God's displeasure at the show. The flagellants in the theater, in France, were represented naked, as penitents.¹

471. Alleged motives of concealment taboo.

Herodotus says

of the Lydians and almost all barbarians that they considered it

shameful for one man to be seen by another naked.²¹

The Jewish

sect, the Essenes, concealed part of the body from the sun, as

the "all-seeing eye of God," even in the bath.

The Jew might

not uncover the body in the face of the temple.

The rules of

the Essenes for bodily necessities were such that those necessi-

ties could not be satisfied on the Sabbath.³ At

Rome "*oppedere* ^

mingere, cacare towards persons or statues belonged to the

grossest marks of contempt, and were so employed more than

we think."⁴ Patursson⁵ bathed with aborigines near the mouth

of the Ob. They would not bare the body below the waist and

were shocked at his immodesty because he was not so scrupulous*

472. Obscenity. Another topic in this group of subjects,

obscurity, is still harder to treat within the limits set by our

mores. It offers still more astounding proofs that the folkways

can make anything "right," and that our strongest sentiments

of approval or abhorrence are given to us by the age and group

in which we live. The tabooed parts of the body are not to be

seen. It is obscenity when they are exposed to sight. We have

already noticed, under the head of decency, a great range of con-

ventions in regard to things and acts which are set aside from all

the common activities of life. We have seen

that there is no

ultimate and rational definition of the things to be tabooed, no

universal agreement as to what they are, no philosophical principle by which they are selected; that the customs have had no uniformity or consistency, and that those usages which we might suppose to be referable to a taboo of obscenity have an entirely different motive, while the notion of obscenity does not exist,

¹ D'Ancona, *Origins del Teatro in Italia* (ist ed.), I, 213, 218, 280, 375.

² Herodotus, I, 10.

³ Lucius, *Essenismus* 62,

68.

⁴ Grupp, *Kutturgesch. der Rom. J&ziserzeit*, I, 24 ; cf. sec. 211.

⁵ *Siberien i Vore Dage* 146.